NPS Form 10-900 United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

### National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property			_
historic name Willow SI			24.472
other names/site number Willa Cat	ther House	DHL File	34-162
2. Location			
street & number Route 688, Frede	rick County Poad	NA I	not for publication
city, town Frederick County			vicinity Wincheste
state Vinginia code VA	county Frederick	code 069	zip code 2260
3. Classification			
	ry of Property	Number of Resource	s within Property
	• •		pncontributing
public-local dist		1	4 buildings
public-State site		<del></del>	0 sites
<del></del>	cture		0 structures
obje	Ct		
			4 Total
Name of related multiple property listing:			g resources previously
<u>NA</u>		listed in the National	Register <u>NA</u>
I. State/Federal Agency Certification			
Signature of centying official Director, Virginia Depart			uation sheet.  Nav 1970  Date
State or Federal agency and bureau	ment of Mistoric re	Sources	
In my opinion, the property meets does	not meet the National Register	criteria. See contin	uation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official			Date
State or Federal agency and bureau			
State of Postar agency and Europa			
National Park Service Certification			
hereby, certify that this property is:			
entered in the National Register.			
See continuation sheet.			
determined eligible for the National			
Register. See continuation sheet.			
<u> </u>			
determined not eligible for the National Register.			
removed from the National Register.			
other, (explain:)		_ <del></del> _	
	Cignature of the Warr		Data of Assis -
	Signature of the Keep	JON .	Date of Action

	tions (enter categories from instructions	
Domest	ic: single dwelling	
Work i	n progress	
-		
Materials (enter categories from instructions)		
foundation	Brick	
walls	Brick	
	Galvanized seam metal	
roof		
	Materials (en	

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

#### Summary Description

Willow Shade, valued for both its architectural and historic significance, is an excellent example of pre-Civil War architecture built in the vernacular late Creek Revival style. It was the childhood home of author willa Cather and was built by her grandfather, William Cather, in 1851. Located on the east side of the historic Northwest Turnpike (present-day Route 50), the road leading from Winchester, Virginia, to Romney, West Virginia, this three-story brick house is cradled between limestone hills to its east and the rise in grade of Poute 50 to its west. A constant flowing creek and the remaining willow trees, hence the house's name, grace the front yard as they have since the structure's beginning. Four outbuildings accompany the house, the most prominent being a 1960s replacement barn erected on the original foundation of the Cather barn that burned in 1883. As did the first barn, today's replacement dominates a limestone outcropping to the south of the house. Directly behind the house is a car shed built about 1965 and following a dirt path to the east is a 1945-1950 chicken coop. To the southeast stands a machine shed built around 1960.

Willow Shade's outstanding and unaltered interior exhibits a center hall symmetrical floor plan with bold, individually styled woodworking in each room. Faux marble mantels, hand-grained doors, and individually patterned window and door surrounds accentuate each of the main four rooms. A rear two-story ell built in 1851 with the main block contains conservative interior detailing as is usually found in more utilitarian quarters. The English basement houses the large kitchen fireplace, running spring, storage rooms, and contemporary living quarters begun in 1988.

#### Architectural Analysis

Willow Shade, a vernacular late Greek Revival-style house (1851), is a five-by-three bay, rectangular plan structure with a three-by-two bay rear ell to the northeast. A brick American bond facade rises from an English basement two stories tall to the corbeled brick eaves that edge a gradually sloped, almost flat, roof of galvanized seam metal. Interior stepped double end chimneys aesthetically balance the north-south elevations. Six-over-six sash windows outlined with block lintels and molded

8. Statement of Significance  Certifying official has considered the significance of this proper  nationally	rty in relation to other properties: statewide \( \frac{\text{X}}{\text{D}} \text{locally}	
Applicable National Register Criteria A XB XC	□D	
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)	□D □E □F □G	
Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions) Architecture Literature	Period of Significance  1851-1883  Cultural Affiliation	Significant Dates 1851 1873-1883
Significant Person Cather, Willa Sibert	Architect/Builder Unknown	

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

#### Statement of Significance

Willow Shade is an excellent example of pre-Civil War rural architecture in Northern Virginia. Its vernacular late Greek Revival-style ornamentation illustrates a residence of quality not often seen in the Back Creek District of Frederick County, Virginia. The American novelist, Willa Cather (1873-1947), winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the first woman to receive an honorary degree from Princeton University, spent her early childhood at Willow Shade. The house was built by her grandfather, William Cather, shortly after he purchased the property in 1851. Willa Cather, at the age of one, moved into the house with her parents, Charles and Virginia Boak Cather in 1874 after her grandparents left to reside in Nebraska with their son, George. The Cathers lived at Willow Shade until 1883 when a fire destroyed the sheep barn and compelled the family to join their relatives in Nebraska. Though only nine years old at the time of her departure from Virginia, Willa later recalled her first childhood home in her last novel, Sapphira and the Slave Girl (1940), and recreated Willow Shade and the surrounding Back Creek environment upon its pages.

Willow Shade retains much of its original integrity with few alterations over the years. The front vard is not as large as it once was due to the widening of the old Northwest Turnpike (Route 50) about 1965-1970. The formal garden is gone, as are many of the large willow trees and a rustic foot bridge that once crossed the currently flowing creek. By 1863 William Cather owned 304 acres on both sides of the turnpike. Today the immediate 4.5 acres create a condensed impression of the limestone hills, outcroppings, fields, and woods that once comprised the entire Cather property.

9. Major Bibliographical References	
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Mildred P. Bennett. The World Of Will	la Cather. Lincoln, Nebraska:
University of Nebraska Press, 196	61.
E.K. Brown, Willa Cather, A Critical E	Biography. New York: Alfred A.
Knopf, 1953.	<del></del>
Willa Cather. Sapphira and the Slave	Girl. New York: Alfred A. Knopf,
sixth printing, 1961.	
Carland P. Quarles. Some Old Homes in	
Winchester, Virginia: Farmers and	
Bernice Slote. Willa Cather, A Pictor	
University of Nebraska Press, 197	
James Woodress. Willa Cather, A Liter	
University of Nebraska Press, 198	
Interview, Phyllis Pitcock Wisecarver, 1989.	granddaughter of Charles M. Poole,
Iava.	
	Cti
Previous documentation on file (NPS):	See continuation sheet
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)	Primary location of additional data:
has been requested	X State historic preservation office
previously listed in the National Register	Other State agency
previously determined eligible by the National Register	Federal agency
designated a National Historic Landmark	Local government
recorded by Historic American Buildings	University
Survey #	X Other
recorded by Historic American Engineering	Specify repository:
Record #	Nebraska State Historical Society
Vire	rinia Division of Historic Landmarks
10. Geographical Data	
Acreage of property 4.521 acres	
UTM References	
A 17 78 2 81 0 4 3 4 92 1 0	B L L L L L L L L L L L L L L L L L L L
Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing
C	
	See continuation sheet
Verbal Boundary Description Verbal Boundary	Description
****	
All that certain lot, piece or parcel	of land with the buildings and
improvements thereon and appurtenances	thereto appertaining, now known
as the Willow Shade property as record	led on a plat showing a portion of
the estate of Charles M. Poole (5/6/19	185) in Frederick County. Virginia
	A See continuation sheet
B I Louis at	
Boundary Justification The bounds have been drawn to include	the house outhwildings and land
upon which they stand as recorded in F	
Page 579 and as illustrated on the May	
Poole estate.	o, 170) plat of the onaries m.
roote estate.	
	See continuation sheet
11. Form Prepared By	
name/title Karen C. Clay	
organization	date May 12, 1989
street & number 219 West Monmouth Street	telephone (703) 662-8919
city or town Winchester	state Virginia zip code 22601

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surrounds open the facade. A simple, vet stately, center portico of paired Doric columns, open cut balusters, and a wide staircase leads to the center hall entry. A narrower, severely damaged stairway was replaced by this reconstruction of the original stair as copied from nineteenth century photographs. The octagonally-paneled front door, beneath a rectangular transom window with geometric tracery and dentil cornice, is flanked by delicately fluted pilasters with exaggerated cyma recta caps and half sidelights with octagonal panels.

The rear ell (1851), extending to the northeast of the main block, exhibits similar bond work, roof pitch, and fenestration. Two interior chimneys rise from the north elevation and the center east elevation. A two-story, L-shaped rear porch with turned posts, horizontal rails, and narrow floorboards connects the main block with the ell. Five rear doors of original (1851) and early twentieth century date (i.e., octasonal paneled doors, pane and panel doors, multipane storm doors) open onto the porch at both levels. The porch's most distinguishing characteristic is the two six-over-six sash windows that complete the south facade and fenestrate the porch wall.

The interior of Willow Shade consists of two full floors and the English basement. The floor plan is L-shaped, composed of the symmetrical four-room main block with center stair and the two-room ell with its side hallway. Since the ell was used for utilitarian purposes (i.e., house-keeping functions, hired help quarters, storage), there was no connection between the second floor of the main block and the ell. Only a first-floor door adjoined the two structures, leading down a hallway to a narrow rear stair that led to the ell's second floor. The English basement has three entries: the rear porch and the south and north elevations. The south door once led to a bricked-in hallway that was opened in 1988 to allow access to the basement rooms. The north door leads to the original kitchen with its large brick hearth fireplace. Both the kitchen and spring room with its constant flow of water lie under the ell. Of the front basement rooms with their six-over-six sash windows, the northwest side is a contemporary efficiency living space begun in 1988 and the southeast side is storage area.

The first floor of the main block is divided by the center entry hallway. A stairway, composed of two staircases interrupted by a landing, is made of two turned balusters to a tread and an octagonal newel post with a round cap. The front entry is outlined by a wide surround and rectangular lintel with a horizontal incised oval motif. An octagonal four-panel door, less elaborately emphasized, leads to the rear porch from the hall.

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The hall flooring of six-inch pine floorboards is continued throughout the structure. To the southeast of the hall is the formal parlor. Here also, as seen in the four main block rooms, is the use of wide surrounds outlining windows and octagonal paneled doors. The lintel pattern for the parlor is a scroll sawn ogee motif. The fireplace is the room's focal point with its molded mantel and carved center medallion. Flanking the hall opposite the parlor is a similar room with a rectangular panel within each door and window lintel. This fireplace has a scroll-sawn ogee motif mantel. All fireplaces in the house have brick hearths.

The second-floor rooms echo the first floor in placement, flooring, and use of wide surrounds, though once again each room is individualized with woodworking patterns. The bedroom above the parlor (south room) has fluted surrounds and lintels with corner blocks. The fireplace boasts an excellent example of faux marbling on the mantel. The second-floor landing has wide peaked lintels above the front hall window, both bedroom doors, and a door leading to the rear porch. Across the hall the second bedroom (north room) repeats the faux marbling on the mantel as seen in the previous bedroom, but utilizes more modest wide molded surrounds and lintels to outline the windows and doors. Two alterations exist in this room. A narrow closet with a four-panel hand-grained door was built out from the wall next to the fireplace at an earlier date. Also, a door cut through to a small room in the ell leads to a 1988 bathroom. Moldings around this door replicate the room's surrounds.

Access to the two-story ell is through a first-floor door in the front north room of the main block and through the rear of the main hall. Two rooms open onto a hallway the length of the ell. The first room closest to the main block exhibits modest molded surrounds and lintels, and a molded mantel above the fireplace. The second room, at the end of the hall, was once used as a kitchen. Windows and door surrounds are made of raised molding with corner blocks. The fireplace with its brick hearth has a scroll-sawn ofee motif mantel and is flanked by two closets built out from the wall. Between the two downstairs rooms a narrow staircase with square balusters and an octagonal banister leads to the second-floor of the ell. As previously mentioned, a small bedroom once used for hired help was adapted in 1988 for a bathroom with access to the north bedroom in the main block. A small portion of the second-floor hall that once led to this converted bedroom was enclosed the same year for use as a small bathroom, accommodating the ell's second floor. The rear bedroom with its corner blocks and fluted surrounds outlining the windows and doors has a fireplace with a simple mantel shelf flanked by two closets built out from the wall. In the right closet is a hiding place built at the time of

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construction. Access is by lifting out a small piece of closet flooring attached to the entire closet threshold. The dimensions of the access panel is 36 inches long by 14 inches wide. It was obviously done at the time of construction because the seven boards of the closet flooring access panel exactly match the seven random width boards on the floor of the room. Construction is done by the flat headed nails of the period. The access panel lifts out to reveal a hole 44 inches deep by 56 inches long by 18½ inches wide. The floor of the hole is wood and is just above the ceiling of the closet in the room below. The walls are brick and are the exterior walls of the house. The only item found in the hole was an artificial leg for a girl or woman or a young boy. The owners have not dated the leg yet, but it is made of carved wood (resembling a shoe last) up to mid-calf, connected to a metal hinge and attached to the thigh by a leather strap.

Willow Shade has always been used as a residence; therefore, its original character has been maintained over the years without major alterations. Only contemporary utilities (i.e., plumbing, electricity, heating) have been introduced. Deterioration during the last twenty years has caused the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. David Parry, to undertake the current repair or restoration of interior woodwork, window sash, flooring, plaster, roof, and porches beginning in 1986. Most of the work, executed by master craftsman William Jelinek, has been the repair of original materials and only when absolutely necessary have replacement parts been introduced to the structure. Willow Shade will stand as an excellent example of quality restoration work and contribute immeasureably to the historic fabric of both Frederick County and the state of Virginia.

Four outbuildings accompany the house on the 4.5 acres, the most prominent being a replacement barn built in the mid-1960s that sits on part of the original rubble wall foundation of the four-story sheep barn erected by Willa Cather's grandfather and his sons. The foundation makes use of a limestone outcropping and natural field stone which originally was much larger than is presently visible. The widening of Route 50 about 1965-1970 caused the adjustment of a dirt driveway that passed the barn on the west side leading to the house, thereby precipitating the removal of a portion of the original foundation. The present single-story, three-by-five bay barn of vertical board siding with multipane fixed windows and an open-end east facade, rises to an asymmetrical seam metal roof. Directly behind the house stands a three-bay car shed, circa 1965, with vertical board siding, dimension lumber supports, fixed pane windows, and dirt flooring. The north bay is enclosed for storage. Beyond the car shed to the northeast is a clapboard-sided chicken coop, circa 1945-

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1950. Log supports raise the coop with its plank flooring above ground, Two three-by-five pane fixed windows (one missing) light the structure while entry is through a west side opening. The shed roof is sheathed with metal. Farthest to the east upon a small hill stands a machine shed, circa 1960, with a seam metal roof, vertical board siding, and large south facade opening.

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#### Justification of Criteria

Willow Shade is eligible for registration as a historic landmark under Criteria C as a structure that embodies the distinctive characteristics of pre-Civil War rural architecture in Northern Virginia. The structure is also associated with Willa Cather, the renowned American author, who spent her first nine years of life with her parents at Willow Shade (1874-1883). Later she would immortalize the house in the epilogue of her last novel, Sapphira and the Slave Cirl (1940).

#### Historical Background

Willa Cather's grandfather, William Cather, purchased 130 acres¹ of Jeremiah Smith's land, known as Flint Pidge (now Gore, Virginia), on 20 September 1851. Jeremiah Smith was an eighteenth-century frontier settler and large property owner in the area known as the Back Creek Valley of Frederick County. His granddaughter, Emily Ann Caroline Smith, married William Cather and together they built Willow Shade shortly after purchasing the land. The Cathers were a prominent and educated family who had farmed in the Back Creek region since the late eighteenth-century and Willa's great grandfather, James Cather, served two terms in the Virginia House of Delegates. Her grandfather, William, a Unionist during the Civil War, allowed Willow Shade to serve as headquarters for Union Army officers, but as a humanitarian he turned the house into a Confederate emergency hospital during a measles epidemic.

Most families in the area operated subsistence farms and earned an income from livestock or milling. William Cather used the limestone and hilly terrain of his property to raise sheep for the Baltimore and Washington, D.C., markets. Along with his sons, he built a four-story barn with a mill to grind feed for his sheep. This barn burned of spontaneous combustion in early 1883.

Willow Shade, as described in a critical biography of Willa Cather, "gives an impression of indestructible solidity; but the moldings, and the woodwork of the entrance lack the fineness as well as the elaboration that give to the old houses in the best streets of Winchester so graceful a charm." Contrary to that author's opinion, Willow Shade is an example of fine craftsmanship and woodworking for pre-Civil War Frederick County. Though the house is unimposing, it exhibits a detailing and individuality rarely seen in other area rural houses of the same period. Also, no other structure has been documented in Frederick County or Winchester as having full sash windows at one end of an open porch, giving the appearance of a

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complete end facade, as does Willow Shade.

Willow Shade was constructed with aesthetic, as well as serviceable attributes. The basement kitchen with its "large fireplace and crane for heavy pots" was described as "interesting, comfortable." Vegetables were stored in the cool back room adjacent to the kitchen where water from the mountain behind the house emerged in a spring that still flows into this room today.

Dampness from the humid Frederick County climate and the spring supplying water to Willow Shade directly into the house, contributed to tuberculosis and diphtheria in Willam Cather's brothers and daughters, as well as his own poor health. Eventually, Willa's grandfather moved to Nebraska in search of a drier climate and to live near his son, George, who already resided there.

In 1874 William left Willow Shade in the care of his other son, Charles, who was living with his wife of one year, Virginia Boak Cather, in his mother-in-law's frame house in fore to the west of Willow Shade. Charles and Virginia were married in 1872 and by December 1873 they had produced their first child, a girl named Wilella for Charles's youngest sister who died prematurely of tuberculosis. Known to her family as Willie, Wilella would later choose to call herself Willa.

Willa lived at Willow Shade with subsequent siblings for nine years, creating the memories that would eventually emerge in her last novel. Sapphira and the Slave Girl (1940). In the book's epilogue she places herself in her mother's bedroom (second floor, south room) and writes:

I could see the clouds drive across the bright, cold blue sky, throwing rapid shadows on the steep hillsides. The slats of the green window shutters rattled, the limp cordage of the great willow trees in the yard was whipped and tossed furiously by the wind.

I had been put into my mother's bed so that I could watch the turnpike, then a macadam road with a blue limestone facing. It ran very near us, between the little creek at the foot of our long front yard and the base of the high hills which shut the winter sun from us early. 15

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The burning of the four-story sheep barn in 1883 was the impetus for Willa's father to move to Nebraska and join the rest of his family. In February of that year the farm was auctioned for \$6000 to David Fries and by April the family was on their way to Nebraska. Willow Shade remained in the Fries family for forty years until 13 November 1923 when it was conveyed to Charles M. Poole. The estate of Charles M. Poole then sold the house to Mr. and Mrs. David Parry in 1985.

#### Endnotes

- 1. E.K. Brown, Willa Cather, A Critical Biography (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p.12.
- 2. Mildred P. Bennett, <u>The World of Willa Cather</u> (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), p.5.
- Bennett, p.5.
- 4. Garland P. Quarles, <u>Some Old Homes in Frederick County, Virginia</u> (Winchester, Virginia: Farmers and Merchants National Bank, 1971), p. 38.
- 5. Bennett, p.17.
- 6. James Woodress, <u>Willa Cather, A Literary Life</u> (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), p.16.
- 7. Woodress. p.21.
- 8. Bennett, p.18.
- a. Brown, p.12.
- 10. Woodress, p.15.
- 11. Bennett, p.7 and Woodress, p.16.
- 12. Bennett, p.10.
- 13. Edith Lewis, <u>Willa Cather Living</u>, <u>A Personal Record</u> (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p.5.
- 14. Woodress, p.21.

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- Willa Cather, Sapphira and the Slave Girl (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961, sixth printine), p.279.
- 16. Woodress, p.31.
- 17. Quarles, p.74.

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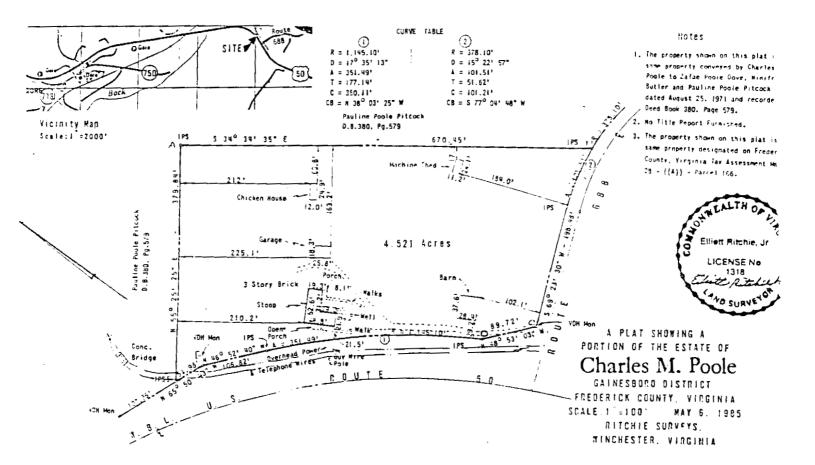
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and as recorded in Deed Book 380, Page 579 between Charles Martin Poole to Zafae Poole Dove, Winifred Poole Butler and Pauline Poole Pitcock.

The boundary begins at Point A, the northeastern corner of the recorded plat and proceeds in a southwesterly direction for 670.45' to Point B, the north side of Frederick County Route 688. Thence it proceeds from Point B in a northwesterly direction following the north side of said Poute 688 for 198.48' to Point C, the southwestern corner of said plat. From Point C the boundary continues in a northwesterly direction, crossing a dirt driveway for 89.72' to Point D, west of the dirt driveway. At Point D the boundary proceeds northwesterly, arcing slightly to the east, for approximately 603.41' to Point E, a point approximately 15' from the east side of the creek. From Point E the boundary continues in a northwesterly direction for 51.98' to Point F on the west side of said creek. At Point F it proceeds in a northeasterly direction for 379.84' to Point A, the point of beginning.

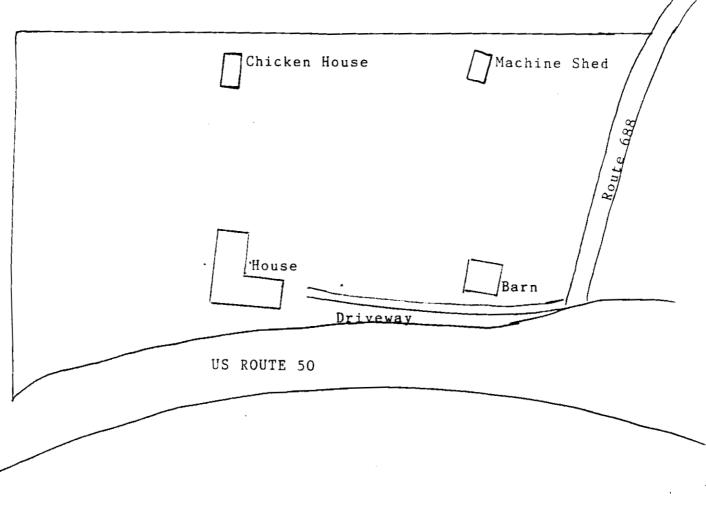
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Willow Shade

scale 1"=100'



